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SUBJECT: CHAD AND ITS FRANCOPHONE REGIONAL AFFILIATIONS: TENDING TO BUSINESS, AND AIMING FOR ELECTORAL AND GEOPOLITICAL GAINS

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

[¶1.](#) (SBU) President Deby took over the annual rotating chairmanship of the Economic Community of Central African States (often referred to by its French acronym CEEAC) in October 2009. He will assume rotating leadership of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) in January 2010. Chad will host Summits of participating states in these two organizations in October 2010 (for CEEAC) and December 2010 (for CEMAC). Meanwhile, Deby hosted the first summit of the Organization for the Harmonization of Commercial Law in Africa (French acronym OHADA) earlier this month.

[¶2.](#) Deby's leadership of CEEAC and CEMAC and his interest in OHADA during an election year will give him opportunities to display the GoC's "competence," put his own statesmanship to the fore, raise Chad's regional profile, and enhance his credibility among colleagues. Deby's opportunities via these organizations could also reinforce his position vis-a-vis Sudan in particular, and Arab League states in a more general way, as none are members of the francophone central African groups he is now cultivating. The GoC remembers CEEAC's refusal to condemn Sudan for sponsoring attacks by Chadian rebels in the 2008-9 timeframe; Deby seeks to reverse the tendency of his neighbors to the west and south to calibrate relations with Chad based on relations with Sudan.

END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

CHAD'S GOALS FOR CEEAC

[¶3.](#) (SBU) The membership of CEEAC, headquartered in Libreville, includes Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo/Brazzaville, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe. Organizational goals consist of developing joint capacities to maintain peace, security and stability; encouraging economic integration; encouraging a culture of human integration; and establishing financing mechanisms for member states. The organization has also adopted several treaties and protocols, among them a mutual assistance pact, a protocol on non-tariff trade barriers and a regional accord to counter trafficking in persons.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) Deby's stated objectives for his ongoing CEEAC chairmanship include harmonized customs procedures among member states; harmonized border controls; reduction in multiple taxes charged to business and other travelers; encouragement of freer movement of goods and people; parallel improvements in law enforcement information-sharing so as not to facilitate improper movement of goods/people; development of common road infrastructure and joint policing near borders; development of new economic investment zones in the CEEAC region; and harmonization of energy, environmental and health policies among member states. Deby has traveled extensively in connection with his CEEAC chairmanship, and seems to be investing considerable effort into building regional linkages through the organization.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) Deby's chairmanship of CEEAC will coincide with the organization's May-June 2010 certification of the Central African stand-by brigade for African Union peacekeeping. A joint military exercise, Operation Kwanza, is scheduled for May-June 2010 in Angola. Deby has made public statements expressing commitment to establishing the brigade and carrying out the planned exercise on schedule. He is likely to be asked by other member states to solicit external military assistance for Operation Kwanza.

CHAD'S GOALS FOR CEMAC

[¶6.](#) (SBU) The membership of CEMAC, headquartered in Bangui, consists of the six Central African nations that share the CFA currency (communaute financiere africaine): Cameroon, Central African

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Republic, Chad, Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. The organization has a central bank (BEAC) located in Yaounde, which has

recently been rocked by a major (\$38 million) corruption scandal. The scandal has resulted in the postponement of the 2009 CEMAC Summit, set for December in Bangui, to January 2010.

¶7. (SBU) Deby's plans for the CEMAC chairmanship include development of anti-corruption standards and agreement on a mechanism for rotating the BEAC governorship among member states, as the long-serving Gabonese head has resigned in connection with the corruption scandal. Deby is also interested in the possibility during his presidency of inaugurating Air CEMAC, a proposed regional airline that has been under discussion for several years (and that has South African interest), and of CEMAC members' reaching a decision on the location of the airline's eventual headquarters -- N'Djamena and Brazzaville are the only two bidders thus far.

CHAD'S GOALS FOR OHADA

¶8. (SBU) Deby hosted the first-ever Summit of OHADA, involving visits by Heads of State/Government from Senegal, Benin, Togo, CAR, Congo/Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Mali and Gabon, on December ¶20.

(Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, and Niger also belong to the organization and sent lower-ranking reps to N'Djamena. The organization has a secretariat in Yaounde, a training facility for magistrates in Cotonou, and a court of justice and arbitration in Abidjan.)

¶9. (SBU) The goal of the OHADA Summit was to urge member states to take action by January 2010 to adopt a revised supra-national set of streamlined commercial laws granting legal and judicial guarantees and ensuring that arbitration becomes the recourse of choice for settlement of contractual disputes, recovery of debts, bankruptcy law, receivership, and accounting. (Chad adopted the package of laws in 2008.) The broad aim of the process is to attract foreign investment to member states. Chad hosted an OHADA event in 1995 that laid out a common commercial charter for member states. The new set of commercial laws revises the charter.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) Deby's leadership of CEEAC and CEMAC and his interest in OHADA during an election year will give him opportunities to put his own statesmanship on public display, to raise Chad's regional profile, and to enhance his credibility among regional colleagues. Deby's organizational opportunities could also reinforce his position vis-a-vis Sudan in particular, and Arab League states in a more general way, as none are members of the francophone central African organizations he is now cultivating.

¶11. (SBU) Whether Deby's counterparts will be receptive to his assertions of interest in regional integration remains to be seen: CEEAC refused to condemn Sudan during the 2008 Chadian rebel attacks on N'Djamena, leading to tensions between Chad and neighbors to the west and south. Deby seeks to reverse the tendency of Central and West African states to calibrate relations with Chad based on their own relations with Sudan.

¶12. (SBU) Deby may come under pressure to merge CEEAC and CEMAC, a proposal that had currency several years ago. Alternatively, he may resist pressure in this direction on grounds that holding two concurrent chairmanships will offer him more optics. Of the two organizations, Deby has been more active on CEEAC business, in part because the BEAC scandal has yet to be resolved during the current CEMAC presidency of CAR and has prevented the organization from looking ahead. Also, Deby may find that he has to share the spotlight in CEMAC with Cameroonian President Paul Biya, long active in the organization through Cameroon's hosting of BEAC. END COMMENT.

¶13. (SBU) Embassies Libreville, Yaounde and Bangui have seen and contributed to this message.